

Bill Cochran

State Representative • District 72

Spring, 2000

Dear Friend,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly ended on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and increased benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included some other information that you might find useful.

In the coming months, I will be working on interim study committees. Study committees allow legislators the opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth than is permitted during the session.

Please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842 if you have any questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,

Bill



How To Reach
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Bill Cochran

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Health care is primary use of tobacco settlement

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate the more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will be used for health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

Seniors also will see benefits

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.



Rep. Cochran discusses legislation with Rep. Paul Robertson (D-Depauw).

Nonprofit organizations may receive EDGE Credits

I authored House Bill 1354, which provides that the economic development for a growing economy (EDGE) board may award an EDGE tax credit to a nonprofit organization that is a high growth company with high skilled jobs if the organization meets certain requirements.

The legislation requires that the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the wages of at least 75 percent of the organization's Indiana workforce must be equal to at least 200 percent of the average wage in the county where the project will be located; (2) the organization must make an investment of at least \$50 million in capital assets; (3) the affected political subdivision must provide substantial financial assistance to the project; (4) the incremental payroll attributable to the project must be at least \$10 million annually; (5) the organization agrees to pay the ad valorem property taxes on the organization's real and personal property that would otherwise be exempt under Indiana Code 61.110; (6) the organization does not receive any deductions from the assessed value of the organization's real and personal property under IC 61.112 or IC 61.112.1; and (7) the organization pays all of the organization's ad valorem property taxes to the taxing units in the taxing district in which the project is located.

Tuition exemption for veterans' children

House Bill 1271, which I authored, provides a tuition exemption for veterans' children. The legislation exempts the child from the payment of mandatory instructional fees.

The legislation also adds provisions for considering other assistance when determining the amount of the higher education benefit for children of veterans and children and spouses of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

Helping working men and women

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90 percent of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments also will increase.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. The maximum benefit will increase from \$252 to \$336 by July 2002. To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million over the next two years.

Research and Development

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about improving efforts to stop a “brain drain” of young people from our state that started because we did not have the quality high-tech jobs that would convince them to stay. The legislature passed a proposal to encourage companies already working in Research and Development to expand their efforts while making Indiana more competitive in attracting new firms to our state. These are the kinds of jobs that can convince our college graduates to stay in the state after getting out of school.

State web site an information gateway

The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R72 and explore various items related to the legislature and our district.

Receive legislative updates via e-mail

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

Sign up to receive legislative updates via email at
<http://www.state.in.us/R72>

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